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PUCKERING UP FOR KISS IN 'DYNASTY'

BY R. MELTZER

"DYNASTY." Kiss. Casablanca NBLP 7152.

Nobody listens to everything. This was true even back in sacred '67, when there couldn't have been more than about seven major with-it American groups under contract to major American labels; a lot of people decided to ignore, for instance, the Electric Flag. Today there's so much bulk you could easily miss every cut of 80% of the superplatinum LPs God hath wrought. I've ignored the entire careers of Genesis and Yes. Don't have a clue what either of these Limey aggregations sounds like. Just an abstract exercise in avoidance. Kiss, on the other hand, I've steadfastly avoided for reasons far more personal.

New Year's Eve of '73 ('72?) ('74?) I happened to catch this show at the Academy of Music in New York headlined by the Blue Oyster Cult. Second-billed was Iggy Pop; third was Teenage Lust, David Peel & the Lower East Side without David Peel—just to give you an idea how relevant it was getting down toward the bottom. Fourth-billed was this unknown combo from Queens, N.Y., a band you could only have applauded for their sheer courage in the face of prevailing trends. This foursome had the anachronistic gall to come out, amid smokebombs (!), wearing hideous face paint (!). What'd they think this was, 1970?! Lotsa laughs greeted the band we now know as Kiss.

Time quickly marched way the heck on and Kiss was suddenly bigger, much bigger, than the triad of higher-billed units put together. Me, I couldn't have cared less; I wanted no part of these jokers, live, on vinyl or otherwise. Somewhat later, my orthodox aesthetic repulsion toward them was reinforced when the rock photog with whom I had been living for a number of years dumped me to marry a rock-writer who was the self-professed "world's leading authority on the rock group Kiss." To make matters worse, the photog had for a long time objected to the way I *kissed*—she thought I opened my mouth too wide.

Summer of '79. An assignment is dropped in my lap and I'm forced to finally play a disc by these buffoons, "Kiss Dynasty." It's safe enough. They're over the hill—a year and a half since the TV documentary I happened to notice in TV Guide. I spin the disc. Lo and behold, I instantly perceive them to be a damn sight more on the money than those other fabled, half-cocked international superstars Mark Bolan, Slade, Boz Scaggs, David Cassidy et al.

"I Was Made for Lovin' You": the ersatz-disco equal of "Heart of Glass." "2000 Man": a *great* uninspired remake of the Stones' classic, less worldly/cynical to such a degree that it's instantly known that all these years of sissy-face haven't obliterated their true Queens rubehood—they're even less debauched than their obvious role model, Alice Cooper.

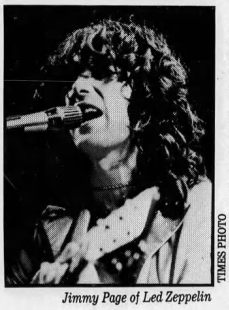
"Sure Know Something": Their expertise in the R&R riff department is top-drawer; if they were nonmillionaire jerkingtons this would read as uncontestedly great preutilitarian mustard. "Charisma": Their self-referential wit is just an iota short of that of the masters of the genre, the Dictators; if they were only funny-for-real they'd be a *gas*.

Still, the waste is thick. The last four cuts on Side 2 are unadulterated throwaways; "Save Your Love," last cut Side 2 is so worthless it would've been the last cut second side of such fiascos as the Knickerbockers' or Mindbenders' LP shenanigans of '66.

All in all, however, "Dynasty" beats general heck on such overpraised recent releases as "Some Girls," "Street Legal" and whatever-they're called by the Cars, Nick Lowe and Rickie Lee Jones—all of which, unfortunately, I chose not to ignore. □

CAN ZEPPELIN FANS BE SO EASILY LED?

BY PATRICK GOLDSTEIN



TIMES PHOTO

Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin

How devoted are Led Zeppelin fans? We'll find out next week when the British supergroup releases "In the Out Door," its first studio album in more than three years, amidst perhaps the most flamboyant merchandising ploy in rock history.

The album, available on Swan Song Aug. 22, has six different covers. Since the records will be enclosed in brown shrink wrap, customers won't know which cover they've bought until they get home. The album will have an initial press run of 2 million, 350,000 of each separate cover (the album art is by Hipgnosis, the innovative British graphics design firm).

So far, the entire project has been shrouded in secrecy. Swan Song sources have refused to describe the album's design, other than to say that each cover "looked a little bit different." So The Times asked various music industry insiders to speculate on what the covers look like.

Their guesses included: a half-dozen mug shots of Zeppelin security guards, snapshots of the six most expensive hotels that have banned the group from their premises and full-color diagrams of Jimmy Page's six favorite guitar chords.

Swan Song staffers confessed that they don't expect "every" Zeppelin fan to buy all six versions, but it's obvious that the label hopes their audience's collector's mentality will spark a healthy percentage of multiple purchases.

And considering the music industry's mounting economic ills, it hardly seems farfetched to predict that other labels may imitate this clever merchandising plan. "It's not such a bad idea," one label source confided—seriously. "If kids will pay for picture discs at twice the cost of a normal record, why not buy two or three different album covers?"

We'd like to take this strategy one step further. Why not sell albums like baseball cards—10 to a package. A Fleetwood Mac fan, for example, might have to buy three different sets of October releases from Warners before finding one that includes the new Mac record.

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COCONUTS: Dolly Parton has been made an honorary member of the New Zealand Maori tribe of Papakura. Her tribal nickname is Princess Sunshine . . . In a report issued last week, the Northern Virginia medical examiner said that Little Feat leader Lowell George did of a drug overdose, not a heart attack as originally announced. The deputy medical examiner termed the overdose "accidental" but refused to specify what drug was involved.

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CRIME OF THE CENTURY: Supertramp, perhaps this year's most commercially successful band, was forced to cancel its July 31 concert date at Halifax, Nova Scotia, after receiving word of a plan to assassinate the band on stage that night. The group originally planned to perform as scheduled but after a Halifax police investigation failed to locate any suspects the band reluctantly decided to cancel the show. All tickets were refunded. A spokesman for the band said the group had no idea why they would be the subject of any death threats.

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DISC 'N' DAT: Also in release this week—the sound track from the film "Americathon," which includes a pair of unreleased Elvis Costello songs, a new Nick Lowe ditty and the soon-to-be-immortal "Don't You Ever Say No to Me Yankee Garbage" by newcomer Zane Buzby. Also due for release this week: "13" by Chicago,

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